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INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0396  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0733  
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RHMFSS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 000009

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV MOPS ML MR

SUBJECT: ALLEGED MAURITANIAN SUPPORT TO MALIAN TUAREG REBELS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Dennis Hankins for Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) During a January 6 meeting with President Abdallahi's effective Foreign Minister and FNDD leader Mohamed Ould Maouloud on internal political issues (SEPTEL), Maouloud raised the FNDD's concern about increasing Mauritanian military support to Malian Tuareg rebels. Maouloud alleged that about a month before the Nampala attack, Tuareg leader Bahanga had transited Nouakchott on the way back from an unsuccessful visit to seek support from Libya. While in Nouakchott, Bahanga had renewed contacts with Surete director Col. Ould Cheikh Ould Hadi who had served as President Taya's go-between with the Tuareg in the 1990s. During the meeting Maouloud says Hadi agreed to provide material support to the Tuareg as punishment for the Malian government's political condemnation of the August 6 coup d'etat. Maouloud claimed he had reliable information the Mauritanian military had provided the Tuareg with fuel, ammunition and money prior to the Nampala attack. He added that he is aware of para-military training being offered by the Mauritanian military for young Berbisch tribesmen near Bassikanou for possible support to the Tuareg. Maouloud noted he had seen press allegations that the mayor of Bassikanou, Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Sidi, was providing material support to the Tuareg but Maouloud said he had no evidence of that. He added, however, that Ould Sidi and his brother, Col. Hanena Ould Sidi, (head of the Mauritanian internal intelligence service) are both Berbisch and have a tribal affinity to the Tuareg.

¶2. (C) Maouloud worried that the junta was playing a very dangerous game playing the Tuareg off the Malian government for purely political reasons and cautioned, "they think they can control the Tuareg -- they can't." He added that in the 90's President Taya had seen the risks of playing with the Tuareg after early support, with Hadi as the go-between, became "a Mafia affair" of gun running. Maouloud added, "Taya was a statesman and saw the risks, eventually coming to terms with Konare. Aziz is no such statesman."

¶3. (C) Comment: This is a sole source report, however, Maouloud has proven himself to be well informed in the past. We have seen some web reports out of Mali that support some of these allegations. Maouloud told Charge he had seen press reports coming from Mali "that seem to confirm what I heard myself." The Mission has been concerned about the willingness of the junta to react against Mali for its political opposition to the coup and believe there is at minimum some substance to the reports of Mauritanian support to the Tuareg. Mission personnel will try to visit the isolated region in mid-January to see what substance we can find to these reports. End Comment

HANKINS